

# Patch High School's JROTC course 'prepares kids for life'

Story by Johnathan Walker

High school is certainly an important time for children. They have so much to learn about so many different topics. Some of the topics can be a bit dry, and it isn't surprising that young people can get bored sitting in a classroom and taking notes. But not all courses are alike, nor are they necessarily boring.

One course, offered at Patch High School, involves many challenging out-of-classroom activities. Although the curriculum isn't found in a textbook, it teaches some of life's most important lessons and it challenges young people.

Subjects cover the basics of history, government, current events and leadership skills, like how to motivate people. The elective course, designed to develop the self-confidence of young people and promote teamwork, is called Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps, or JROTC.

"It prepares kids for life," explained Chief Warrant Officer Jack Goldman, JROTC senior instructor. "Every cadet can gain poise and confidence as a result of the JROTC experience." The program currently includes 68 students, or "cadets." They participate in numerous activities including drill team, rifle team, color guard and honor guard programs.

Sgt. Maj. George Goodrum, JROTC instructor, said, "It gives a young person something other than a regular high school class." According to Goodrum, drill team members practice weekly during the spring sports season and compete against other district schools; rifle team members compete with other area teams and are eligible to go to the European championships.

"The color guard and honor guard are constantly in demand by area organizations. They provide a degree of formality to events, especially high-profile events like the EUCOM Commander's New Year's reception," Goldman said.

Goodrum listed some of the many other activities cadets

are involved with, including Patch Elementary School's holiday party for special needs children; Youth Services' annual Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween haunted house and Christmas party; Patch High School's graduation ceremony; and helping with the Officers and Civilians Spouses' Club Bazaar.

The cadets also organize the annual Turkey Shoot, a fundraising marksmanship contest open to the entire community. The proceeds are used to help sponsor an orphanage in Romania, where the cadets annually hand deliver a \$1,000 donation to support the children.

But the cadets don't just participate in community service projects. They also find time for self-improvement and self-development programs. They learn how to rappel from a tower, located at Panzer Training Area, with instruction from U.S. Army Special Forces personnel. The cadets also learn about orienteering, which involves map-reading and land-navigation skills.

Additionally, there are opportunities to attend annual summer camps in Germany and England, where cadets train on confidence courses, play team sports, practice land-navigation skills and learn water-safety techniques.

The battalion holds both an awards banquet to recognize outstanding performance by cadets, and a formal military ball annually. The ball draws many community members and, notably, this year's guest speaker was Lt. Gen. John Sylvester, U.S. European Command chief of staff.

When asked what he likes best about the JROTC program, Cadet Lt. Col. Zachary Kell, JROTC battalion commander, said, "You don't just sit in a classroom, you're outside a lot and there's always something new to learn."

Established by Congress in 1916, the JROTC program was developed in 1911 by Army Lt. Edgar Stevens. He conceived the idea of a high school class that would teach young people to be better citizens. Today, selected private and public high schools in all 50 states have JROTC programs, teaching leadership, teamwork and self-confidence skills.



During the annual 10-day summer camp, cadets are challenged to demonstrate their orienteering skills, which include using a compass and map reading, among other land-navigation activities.



photos courtesy Patch High School JROTC



Cadets test their abilities in a canoe during adventure training held near Grafenwöhr Training Area. Cadets say the training helps them conquer challenges they never thought they could.



(Above) Color guard team members compete at a 2002 conference meet in Mannheim. JROTC receives requests throughout the year for the color guard to perform opening ceremonies at local events.

(Left) Drill team members traveled to Bad Kreuznach in 2001 for an area competition. They brought back three trophies, including 1st place precision platoon and 2nd place for precision squad and conference.



Members of the competitive rifle marksmanship team, shown in their leather shooter's clothing, practice for an upcoming match against another JROTC battalion.